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ABSTRACT

The Los Angeles Valley College Drug Education Program was established in 1970 as a central community resource agency specializing in narcotic and drug abuse prevention and education. The program included two components: a training component (short courses, seminars, speakers bureau) and a resource center (library, publications program). Because of declining use of the program's services, a questionnaire was designed and mailed to 574 schools and other institutions which were identified as potential users of the program's facilities. Of the 105 valid responses, 53 or 50.5 percent had never used any of the available services. Over 60 percent of these were not even aware that the services existed. Of those who had made use of the services, the greatest number had made use of the speakers bureau. The next most popular services, in decending order, were the film library, the newsletter, publications, the reference library, the referral service, and exhibits. For the most part, users' evaluations of the services were in the very good to good range. On the basis of these findings, recommendations for future operations are made, primarily concentrating on advertisement of the services. (NHM)

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REPORT ON A NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION OF A DRUG EDUCATION PROGRAM

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JC 760291

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of the needs assessment and evaluation was twofold to determine if the community need for the services of the Drug Education Program was greater than seemed obvious from utilization of the services within the last fiscal year. Also, if use of the services had indeed declined, the evaluation was to determine why the decline had occurred.

A brief history of the program from its inception in 1969 through April 1976 is included.

The method of conducting the needs assessment and evaluation are detailed along with examples of the cover letter, questionnaire, and informational sheet sent to the schools and agencies questioned. The geographical area targeted is delineated and the method of assessing validity of responses is explained.

On the basis of the questionnaire replies, it is explained, and the measurable validity of the responses, we were able to determine the general, overall success of the Drug Education Program, in which areas the program needed strengthening, in which areas the program was most effective, and what recommendations we could make to the implementing of future, similar programs.

Questionnaire responses are tabulated using tables of statistics and explanatory paragraphs.

Recommendations for other, similar programs are made on the basis of the questionnaire response and rate of return and the director's personal knowledge of the program. Among these recommendations are the need to determine specific target populations and target geographic areas and to stick to them; the need to reassess the needs of the target population periodically; the need to generate interest in the program through periodic bulletins and news releases, and the need to make sure that interested agencies are aware of the program's existence.

Los Angeles Valley College
DRUG EDUCATION PROGRAM

REPORT ON A NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

Purpose

Since the Community Services budget at Los Angeles Valley College has been cut and there is a shortage of funds for the Drug Education Program for the fiscal year 1976-77, some services of the program must be cut back. It is not feasible, certainly, to eliminate the coordinator or the secretary, and therefore, it seems best from an economic standpoint to eliminate the speakers bureau component of the program, as very little of the actual budget goes toward maintaining either the film library or the literature.

If, through a needs assessment, we should find that the community need for and use of our services is greater than we had anticipated at the point of decreasing funds, the program may be reinstated. If, however, we find there is no longer a need for the services or the need has been drastically reduced, funding will remain as now exists, and the program will be phased out with the speakers bureau being terminated 30 June 1976. However, if this is the case, we will also conduct an evaluation to determine why use of our services has declined.

History

According to the original goals of this program, the Narcotics Information Resource Center was established as a central community resource agency specializing in problems of narcotics and drug abuse.

The Center was designed for use by all members of the San Fernando Valley community with the purpose of helping those who need it and educating the general public by acting as a clearinghouse for all information on drug problems. The San Fernando Valley community was later defined as: various need-to-know persons and agencies, i.e., students, faculty, parents, community leaders, agency personnel and others. Financed by the Los Angeles Community College District's community services funds, the Center's main goal was twofold: training and a resource center.

The training segment was to consist of:

1. short-term college non-credit courses,
2. a speakers bureau,
3. informal student seminars,
4. family drug seminar series

A course for elementary school teachers was offered through U.C.L.A. Extension Division in the fall of 1970 and the spring and fall of 1971. Despite apparently good turnout at these non-credit classes, later efforts to reinstitute the classes for nurses and teachers were not successful. The family drug seminar series never really developed, despite one successful series held at Maud Booth Family Center in North Hollywood, because of reluctance on the part of families to openly admit to the problem personally. The student seminars also apparently died from lack of interest. These three programs were gradually phased out and at this time only the speakers bureau is left as a viable training program.

The speakers bureau was to be staffed by former drug users who

were no longer using drugs. These speakers were to appear as requested before community groups and in classrooms to relate their experiences with and feelings about drug usage. The focus of the speakers bureau tends to vary depending upon the interest and expertise of the speakers and their director. At the present time, the emphasis is on values clarification and learning to deal with feelings rather than on personal experiences and "scare" tactics.

In June 1970, Bruno Cicotti, then coordinator of the Narcotics Information Resource Center (name changed to Drug Education Program early in 1975) stated that the speakers bureau was "one of the most successful programs that we have offered." The public seemed most responsive to this program and it was therefore recommended that the speakers bureau be accelerated.

The second major component of the program, the resource center, was to be developed in two ways. The first was the development of a library to include films, filmstrips, the best books in the field, and pamphlets from a variety of government and private agencies. College students were to be trained as operators for the film equipment as needed, however, it has been easier to simply loan the films out and trust to the expertise of the borrowers, although this has not been without its problems. The second component of the resource center was to be the development of filmstrips using students and closed circuit television for use by the speakers bureau, training sessions, and community groups.

This latter project with filmstrips never developed. However,

a videotape camera and recorder were purchased by the center and were put into use in 1975 and are presently being used by the director of the speakers bureau to monitor and record speaking engagements in the classroom. These videotape records will be used while the speakers bureau continues to provide training and updating for their speakers. The films will be available to interested individuals or agencies as needed.

A library of books, films, filmstrips, and pamphlets and an article file have been developed. The book library has dwindled somewhat due to a failure to return borrowed materials, and many of the films have worn out. Some are replaced by newer copies, others are not replaced if the material is no longer relevant. New films are previewed on an ongoing basis; however, most are either not timely or not socially relevant. Purchase of new films is recommended when apparent.

Many pamphlets and other informational materials are readily available, and we have many free handouts available as well as some for sale. We also develop materials of our own from time to time. We have a well-stocked article file. The printed materials were expanded to include a bi-monthly newsletter and a resource list which is updated every six months.

Method

Although we were able to use two consultants from the Los Angeles County Superintendent of Schools office, this was mainly on an advisory basis, and the needs assessment and program evaluation have been done from within the Drug Education Program by the director of the speakers bureau.

It was decided that the most equitable method of conducting the evaluation was to send a questionnaire to the target population. Both those who had a record of previous use of our services and those who, according to our records, had never used our services were contacted. A letter (Appendix I) and a Questionnaire (Appendix II) were sent out, along with an informational sheet on the program (AppendixIII). Also included was a postage prepaid envelope to encourage return of the questionnaire. It was decided that, even though our services had often been used outside of our original target area, the time and expense involved in surveying the city or county of Los Angeles and all the outlying areas in which our services had been used would be prohibitive. Our original target area geographically alone was surveyed. This covered the area bounded by the county line on the west, the L.A. Unified School District lines on the east and north, and Mulholland Drive on the south (Appendix IV).

A total of 574 questionnaires were sent out to the following:

Elementary Schools	143
Junior High Schools	28
Senior High Schools	18
Community Adult Schools	7
Alternative Schools	1
Children's Centers	15
Continuation Schools	14
Schools for the Handicapped	6
Diagnostic Learning Centers	1
Parent-Teacher Associations	189
College Departments	13
Community Groups	139

The Parent-Teacher Associations receiving questionnaires were those of the elementary, junior, and senior high schools also receiving questionnaires. The college departments receiving questionnaires were those which were deemed applicable (health, nursing, women's physical education, men's physical education) within the four

colleges within the geographical target area.

The questionnaires themselves were designed to measure:

1. percentage of target population using our services,
2. percentage of target population not using our services,
3. reasons for non-use of our services by target population,
4. which of our services user population used and how frequently,
5. did user population use our services more frequently as time progressed, less frequently, or consistently every year,
6. if user population used services less, why was this so,
7. what additional needs did the target population have in the area of drug information and education.

Validity of this questionnaire was somewhat assessable on the basis of our own records kept during the six years the program has been in operation relating to speaking engagements, newsletter mailing lists, and use of our films.

On the basis of the questionnaire replies and the measurable validity of the responses, we were also able to determine the general, overall success of the Drug Education Program, in which areas the program needed strengthening, in which areas the program was most effective, and what recommendations we could make to the implementing of future, similar programs.

Results

On the basis of a tabulation of the number of speaking engagements for each month (September-January) of the fall semester 1975-76 as compared to the same time the prior year, we were able to see that the number of speaking engagements had dropped dramatically. In our busiest month of the 1974-75 period, we covered as many appointments as were covered in all five months of the 1975-76 period.

Our speaking staff was used in the 1975-76 fall semester only one third as much as the same time the previous year, and usage of our films and resource materials had also declined, but not as markedly. Based on these results we proceeded with the formal evaluation of the program to determine why the use of our services had declined.

We staggered the mailing out of our questionnaires, sending our first batch out 3 March and our last batch 1 April. The date of return requested on each was altered, if necessary, to request a return within 15 days of mail-out. April 15 was chosen as our final cut-off date.

Of the 574 questionnaires sent, 140 were returned to us by the respondents and three were sent back to us by the post office marked undeliverable. Since there was no time to do an intensive telephone follow-up of those who did not respond within the allotted time, we can make no presumptions about what variables might have effected this return rate. However, we felt a 24.4% response adequate for the purposes of this study and confined our study to those responses received by the arbitrary cut-off date of 15 April.

Although 82.9% of these responses came back to us within the 15 days requested on each individual letter, we could draw no other inferences from this since there were no major differences in responses among these and those received later than the stated 15 days.

The 140 returns are broken down by percentage of response for each category in Table 1.

Table 1.

	Sent	Returned	Percent Response
Elementary Schools	143	40	28.0%
Junior High Schools	28	13	46.4
Senior High Schools	18	12	66.7
Community Adult Schools	7	1	14.3
Alternative Schools	1	0	0
Children's Centers	15	4	[illegible].7
Continuation Schools	14	6	42.9
Schools for the Handicapped	6	2	33.3
Diagnostic Learning Centers	1	0	0
Parent-Teacher Associations	189	20	10.6
College Departments	13	6	46.2
Community Groups	139	36	25.9

Since the questionnaires were sent out at different times, there does exist a chance that those which were sent out earliest may have picked up some extra returns simply because there was more time allowed for return. This does seem to be the case for the community groups, at any rate. As they were the last group sent out on 1 April, I believe that they would have shown a much greater rate of return in comparison with the elementary, junior and senior high schools had more time elapsed. However, I do not feel that this seriously affects the responses.

It was necessary to weed out from the 140 returns, at this point, those considered not valid for the purposes of this study. There were 36 such returns, or 25.7% of the total return. A

returned questionnaire was considered invalid if it was filled out improperly (10 returns) or the responses on the return were substantially different from what we knew to be true from our records (26 returns). The incorrect responses included two schools who stated that they had used our services, but whose previous use was not recorded by us, and whose comments allowed for the strong possibility that the returnees had confused our program with that of some other, similar agency. The other 24 incorrect respondees stated that they had never used our services when our records clearly showed that they had. The implications of this finding will be discussed in the "Recommendations" section of this paper. Of the 36 returns in the invalid category, four said they were glad to learn of our services and would use them as the need arose and 7 made specific requests for additional information about various components of our program. These requests for information and use of our services are presently being filled.

Of the 105 valid responses left, 53 or 50.5% had never used any of our services, and 52 or 49.5% had previously used some or all of our services. Table 2 shows the breakdown of the "never used your services" returns. Of the 53 respondents in this category, 6 promised to use our services in the future as the need arose and were glad to find out about the program, and 14 requested specific information, speakers, or to be put on our newsletter mailing list. These requests are being filled at present.

For those who stated that they had previously used our services, the use rate of the services offered is shown in numerical form in Table 3 rated from most used service at the top to least used at

the bottom. This table also shows how the respondees rated each service they had used from very good to poor. Two columns had to be labeled "none checked". This indicates a situation in which a box was checked for the number of times a service was used, but not how helpful that specific service was; or a box was checked on the rating scale, but no box checked for the corresponding service.

Only one respondent had used all 7 available services, but several had used 6 of them.

Many of the respondents specifically stated that they were only aware of some of our services, but not others. This was especially true among those receiving the newsletter, which included many libraries. Most of these expressed interest in finding out more about our other services and also expressed needs for additional information in the drug area.

Table 4 shows how many of the 52 respondents who had used our services had been using them more, less, or about the same each succeeding year they had used the program. Among the 7 who used the program less, the following reasons were given: one stated there was no need for auxiliary services, one felt the services were not relevant now, one had heard that no speakers were available, one had a time problem, one felt the direct drug problems at school were less apparent, and two had gained more material to work within their schools and felt more competent. Of this same group, we received 9 responses for more information which are being processed now, and one respondent stated plans to use our services in the future.

Table 2.

	Number	Percentage
we were not aware of your services	33	62.3%
no need for auxiliary services	10	18.9
services not relevant for us	7	13.2
no reason given	3	5.7

Table 3.

Services Available	Response	None Checked	Once	2-6x	6-12x	12+x
Speakers Bureau	43	3	8	25	4	3
Film Library	31	1	6	11	8	5
Newsletter	28	5	1	7	6	9
Publications	21	2	3	6	5	5
Reference Library	14	1	3	7	3	0
Referral Service	8	1	2	5	0	0
Exhibitions	8	1	2	5	0	0

Services Available	Response	None Checked	Very Good	Good	Avg.	Fair	Poor
Speakers Bureau	44	4	25	12	2	1	0
Film Library	31	3	21	7	0	0	0
Newsletter	28	4	14	8	2	0	0
Publications	20	1	16	2	1	0	0
Reference Library	14	1	8	5	0	0	0
Referral Service	8	2	4	2	0	0	0
Exhibitions	8	0	6	2	0	0	0

Table 4.

Since 1970, we have been using your services:

more	20
less	7
no change	8
not applicable	2
no response	15

To the question "Do you have additional needs in the area of drug information and education?" we received the following answers:

7 need more information on available services/resources

1 need counseling and information on other than drugs

11 requested speakers

11 requested general material

13 asked for specific information

3 expressed a desire for ongoing speaking programs

2 felt they needed more parent education

2 wanted more comprehensive services from us

Some of the more interesting comments written in are:

We had an excellent speaker who made "real" many of the theoretical aspects of drug education.

It is a long distance to your office and back to my school. Could films be mailed?

The speakers sometimes become heroes to the students.

We're on a tight budget and need your publications. Can you provide 100 or more of each publication every semester?

We'd use your services more if you provided us with request cards through the mail.

Thanks for being there.

We've had excellent speakers, but also poor ones and "no-shows".

We depend on your bulletin to keep us up-to-date.

Now that we know about you, we'll make use of your services. (this stated many times)

Speakers sometimes make drug use appear glamorous.

We are an elementary school and don't want to start drug information at this age.

Good to know your services are available.

There is a real need for drug education in this community.

Recommendations

Validity of the responses was found to be an important factor in assessing results of this survey. Of the 26 responses which exhibited misinformation (mainly, stating our services had never been used when they had been), only one respondent commented.

> I have been administrator of this school only one year and therefore not sure whether or not your service was used in the past.

The other 25 seemed quite convinced of the verity of their misinformation. The possibility does exist that it is, perhaps, easier for some individuals to state they have never used the services and thereby avoid responding to the rest of the questionnaire. It is also possible that some confusion was created by referring to the program as the Drug Education Program, whereas we had been known as the Narcotics Information Resource Center until just a year ago.

It is more reasonable to assume that the turnover among administration, especially within the schools, and a lack of adequate record-keeping by same results in a lack of knowledge about our program. However, this could have been remedied by more attention on our part to publicizing our services and keeping our name and services known to the population we are serving.

The high ratings of our services show that the decline in use was not so much connected to an evaluation of our services as irrelevant or unsuitable, as it was simply to lack of awareness of what we had to offer. This was borne out by the number of requests for more information about the program, speakers, and specific materials, as well as the number of respondents who stated they would be availing themselves of our services in the future.

On the basis of these returns, some <u>recommendations</u> for future similar programs can be made.

1. Determine specific target populations and target geographic areas, and STICK TO THEM. Our program's interests are better served when we put the time, energy, and money we expend in servicing outside our area into making our program better known within our own area.

2. Reassess the needs of the target population annually, using suitable instruments. This is well worth the initial expense and time involved. It is also a way of keeping the agency's name before the public.

3. Generate interest in the program by issuing periodic bulletins sent to interested individuals and groups and everyone on the mailing list which inform them of new projects in which the program is involved, new developments within the program's area of expertise, and "state-of-the-program" messages. A newsletter can serve this function.

4. Assume not enough people are benefiting from your services and take steps to remedy this by making your program known -- no one can use your services unless they know you are there.

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LOS ANGELES VALLEY COLLEGE

DRUG EDUCATION PROGRAM

Merle E. Fish, Ph.D., Coordinator

Having been in operation since February 1970, the Los Angeles Valley College Drug Education Program is attempting to assess its value and effectiveness within the community.

Attached is a list describing the services we provide. Please review these services and let us know how important each one is to you by answering the questions listed on the attached questionnaire.

Please return this questionnaire to us by March 30, 1976, in the enclosed stamped self-addressed envelope.

Thank you for your help.

Sincerely yours,

Merle E. Fish

Merle E. Fish, Ph.D.
Coordinator

MPW/ds
Enclosures (2)

DRUG EDUCATION PROGRAM

QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Please check one below:

☐ A. We have never used the Drug Education Program services because:

____ we were not aware of your services

____ we have no need for auxiliary services

____ your services are not relevant to our needs

☐ B. We have previously used your services. The last time was in:

Summer_____ Spring_____ Fall_____

1970__ 1971__ 1972__ 1973__ 1974__ 1975__ 1976__

If you checked A above, please proceed to question number 4. If you checked B, please answer questions numbered 2, 3, and 4.

2. Please check one box below in both categories for each available service.

SERVICES AVAILABLE	HOW OFTEN USED?					HOW HELPFUL?				
	never	once	2-6x	6-12x	12+x	very good	good	average	fair	poor
Reference Library										
Speakers' Bureau										
Film Library										
Referral Service										
Newsletter										
Publications										
Exhibitions										

Comments on the above:

3. Since 1970, we have been using your services:

more____ less____ no change____

If less:

_____ no need for auxiliary services

_____ services not relevant

_____ need more information about all services offered

_____ other: _____

4. Do you have additional needs in the area of drug information and education? (Specify).

LOS ANGELES VALLEY COLLEGE DRUG EDUCATION PROGRAM

Phone: (213) 781-0866 Hours: M-F, 8:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

THE CENTER IS HERE TO HELP YOU!

The Drug Education Program, located on the Los Angeles Valley College Campus, is a complete drug education and information center serving the San Fernando Valley community. The Program is a unique operation which acts as a central community resource agency and drug information clearinghouse, assisting community organizations, schools, and individuals in the task of drug abuse prevention and education.

SERVICES AVAILABLE

Reference Library - A full reference library of books, pamphlets, articles, journals and brochures relating to drugs is maintained at the Program's offices. These materials, also available on a loan basis, cover all aspects of drug use and abuse, including related legislation and law enforcement; social, economic, legal, pharmacological, medical and psychiatric information. The materials are widely used by students preparing research papers as well as teachers and interested individuals.

Speakers Bureau - One of the main focuses of the Program is the speakers bureau staffed by former drug users, para-professional counselors who have been trained to relate their experiences and the problems caused by drug abuse to teachers and students, community organizations, church and other interested groups. Speakers are available on an ongoing as well as a one-call basis.

Film Library - 16 mm motion pictures on drug abuse education as well as 35 mm sound filmstrips may be borrowed without charge for showing to school and community groups. Ask for up-to-date list of titles.

Referral Service - A list of current substance abuse and related aid agencies in the San Fernando Valley is updated three times a year and made available at the Program's offices.

Newsletter - The Drug Education Program publishes a Newsletter reporting the latest developments in the community relating to drug abuse problems and education which is available free on request.

Publications - Brochures, pamphlets, journals, reprints, charts, posters, and other printed materials are available in bulk for distribution to schools, fraternal and civic organizations, business groups and churches.

Exhibits - The Program makes available excellent charts, posters, and dioramas as well as publications for exhibits and displays and will also set up and maintain drug information booths on request.

Located in Bungalow 35 on the Los Angeles Valley College campus, 5800 Fulton Avenue, Van Nuys, California 91401.

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